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October 22, 1991

Rec'd by JF 10/22

The Hon. Richard Solomon
Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific
Department of State
Washington, DC

Dear Assistant Secretary Solomon:

As plans for Secretary Baker's visit to China in November become more definite, we at Asia Watch would very much like to meet with you to discuss several human rights concerns which might be raised before and during the visit.

As you know, we have been very critical of administration policy on China in the past, even before the June 4 crackdown, in part because we felt decidedly mixed signals were being sent. This visit could be used to send a direct and forceful message that unconditional extension of MFN does not mean that concern for human rights has lessened. This can only be done by ensuring that human rights is given equal time with discussions of trade and nuclear non-proliferation issues as well as other outstanding problems in the US-China relationship.

The visit will clearly be of great importance to the Chinese. Whatever Secretary Baker says or does, the fact that he is in Beijing will in itself signify the administration's commitment to strengthening relations with China at the same time it signals a further relaxing of US sanctions. We believe, as I'm sure you do, that a visit of such significance should produce some concrete human rights concessions from the Chinese government, and there should be some indication before the trip that those concessions will be forthcoming. The question is what we can reasonably ask and receive, and this is what we would like to discuss with you.

Here are some initial thoughts:

United States Department of State
Office of EOI, Privacy, & Classification Review
Review Authority: AINSWORTH, THOMAS
Date: 12/01/94
Case ID: 9401915

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Before the Visit

1. In May, Assistant Secretary Schifter turned over a list of some 850 names of non-violent political detainees to Ambassador Zhu with requests for detailed information about their current status. The Chinese response, as we understand it, has been slow and largely confined to statistics. We think Secretary Baker should request in advance of the trip that a more detailed accounting be handed over to him during the visit, and that it should be made clear that the US would like to see the prisoners on that list released. We frankly are concerned that the issue of Chinese political prisoners has fallen to the bottom of the US agenda.

2. The importance of human rights and concern about imprisoned dissidents can be expressed in speeches and in toasts. We believe it would be particularly useful if Secretary Baker were to ask to deliver an address to Beijing University students on the US-China relationship, in which the issue of human rights and democratization could be highlighted.

During the Visit

1. Given the concern about prison-made exports, Secretary Baker could request access by embassy officials to any and all labor reform camps and note concern over the inability of Shanghai consular officials to visit the New Life Cotton Mill in Nantong.

2. Given the concern over how "counterrevolutionary" prisoners are treated, Secretary Baker could again request that embassy officials be allowed to visit prisoners such as Chen Ziming, Wang Juntao, Ren Wandong and Wei Jingsheng.

3. Secretary Baker should invite a handful of well-known released dissidents to the embassy for a meeting, including Dai Qing, the journalist prevented from going to Harvard to take up a Niemann fellowship; Liu Xiaobo, the literary critic who had been a visiting fellow at Columbia; and Han Dongfang, the labor leader.

4. All journalists have difficulty in getting regular access to Tibet. A general concern for freedom of the press could be demonstrated by requesting such access and an end to the jamming of the Chinese language VOA. Secretary Baker could also express concern about banning Orville Schell from speaking at the Foreign Correspondents Club in June and expulsion of British journalist Andrew Higgins over his reports on Inner Mongolia.

5. Secretary Baker could also stress the importance of access to China by independent human rights and humanitarian organizations such as Asia Watch, Amnesty International and the ICRC.

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Human Rights Concerns Outside China

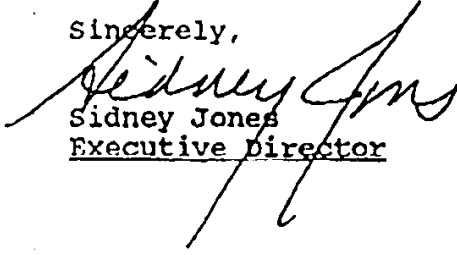
6. Secretary Baker should express strong criticism of China's growing arms trade with Burma and note US concern over the human rights situation there and continuing house arrest of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

7. He should also express concern over China's efforts to block a public Security Council condemnation of Khmer Rouge plans to repatriate over 40,000 refugees from a Thai border camp.

We know President Bush will not be stopping in China, but we believe it would also be useful if the President used the occasion of his trip through Asia to make a strong speech underscoring American concerns about human rights in China in the context of policy concerns in Asia more broadly.

I do hope we can discuss some of these issues, and I will call your office tomorrow to see if a meeting can be arranged. My colleagues and I look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,


Sidney Jones
Executive Director